

PINYON JOSHUA INSTANT STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 560 acres

The Natural Area is located approximately 12 miles south west of the town of Silver Peak, Nevada in Esmeralda county. Its legal description is: T. 3S., R. 38E., N1/2, SW1/4, S1/2SE1/4 Section 32. The Natural Area contains 560 acres of public land, and was designated in 1965 (PLO 3530) because it represented the northern extreme of the Joshua Tree. An 80 acre parcel of private land extends into the section from the eastern side. The remainder of the Natural Area boundary conforms to the boundary of Section 32. The Natural Area was evaluated along with its contiguous roadless area, inventory units NV-050-0338A and NV-050-337. These units were found to lack wilderness character during the Statewide/Intensive Wilderness Inventory.

NV-050-0338A/NV-050-0337 - Silver Peak Range South/Company Springs: The unit contains a portion of the Silver Peak Range and a vast spreading bajada sweeping to the south and east away from the mountains. The Pinyon Joshua Transition Research Natural Area, 560 acres, lies in the southwest edge of the unit NV-050-0337, which contains 25,206 acres, and the northeast edge of unit NV-050-0338A, containing 54,845 acres. The combined total of the two units and the natural area is 80,611 acres.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness
560 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The Pinyon Joshua Transition Research Natural Area and its contiguous roadless acreage lacks wilderness character and should be dropped from further wilderness consideration.

The long and short term efforts of releasing Pinyon Joshua Transitional Research Natural Area from the interim management protection provided to lands under wilderness review and returning it to its previous management as a Natural Area would be that all uses and developments which previously were compatible with management would continue to be permitted.

The recommendation of Pinyon Joshua Transition Research natural Area as suitable for wilderness is the only option foregone by the adoption of the present recommendation. Because the evidence of man's activities in this area are beyond rehabilitation by hand labor or natural means, the Natural Area does not now, nor will it ever, meet the natural criteria for wilderness suitability. Therefore, the adoption of the present recommendation will not affect any options considered in the future for management of the area.

3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

A. Naturalness: Both of the two units have been extensively impacted by roads, ways, range improvements, buildings, mines, and related mining activities. The Silver Peak Mining District impacts both units which also include the natural area. The above mentioned intrusions are numerous and can be found throughout the units. Due to the size of the units, both areas have natural areas larger than 5,000 acres but neither were determined to possess wilderness character. The Natural Area itself is impacted with mining activities, a spring development, several roads, a water tank, and a corral.

B. Solitude: The topography from small canyons and draws, to broad sweeping bajadas with scattered low growing desert shrubs and small stands of pinyon/juniper provide areas of solitude but were not of an outstanding quality. The moderate natural screening and the three well-traveled roads through the Natural Area limit the opportunity for solitude to a very few secluded spots in the center of the section. By itself, the Natural Area does not offer an outstanding opportunity for solitude.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Recreational opportunities available are chukar hunting, hiking, camping, and horseback riding. There are several primitive recreational activities available in the Natural Area, however, neither their diversity nor their quality was found to be outstanding. By itself, the Natural Area does not offer an outstanding opportunity for primitive and confined recreation.

D. Special Features: The total area has been known to be inhabited by wild horses. No other supplemental values are known to exist other than the Natural Area designation.

4. MANAGEABILITY

The Natural Area is not manageable for wilderness characteristics. Three roads divide the Natural Area into four small pieces. The road crossing the SW corner, an access road to Mohawk Mine 10 miles further north, is the most developed and heavily used. A spring development at Big Spring is also served by this road, and contains several additional roads, a water tank and pipeline system, a post and wire corral, and loading chute of heavy construction. The access roads are used frequently, and apparently primarily by recreationists. Campfire rings were observed in the area of the spring.

The road to Upper and Lower Cowcamp Springs cut across the southern portion of the Natural Area, running northward into the private parcel and east into Clayton Valley. The patented land is a Stock Raising and Homestead entry of 1933. At the western edge of the parcel is the remains of an abandoned house. There were several small tailing piles on the hill across the road from the old house and a barely noticeable trail leading to a possible old mineshaft.

A third road crosses the northeast corner of the Area, from the Cowcamp Springs road to Cone Spring and a mining development just north of it. All roads within the Natural Area are well maintained with road equipment and easily accessible by passenger car.

5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES

A minerals report from the U.S. Bureau of Mines and the U.S. Geological Survey was not present in the 1980 Intensive Wilderness Inventory report.

6. SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

An accelerated Intensive Wilderness Inventory was conducted on the designated Natural Area. A 30-day public comment period on the results of the inventory was announced in the Federal Register and held from January 1 to January 30, 1980. A workshop on the inventory results was held in Las Vegas on January 9, 1980.

The Statewide Intensive Inventory was the final phase of the inventory process to determine an areas wilderness potential. The Pinyon Joshua Transitional Research Natural Area was a part of two of these areas inventoried. The public comment period began on April 1, 1980 and ended June 30, 1980.

During the 90-day comment period a news release and Federal Register notice were used to inform the various publics of the review period, opportunity for comment, and locations of meetings. The story was carried widely in Southern Nevada newspapers, radio stations, and tv stations. The Lincoln and Esmeralda County Commissioners, Lincoln County Conservation District Board, Southern Nevada Conservation Council, Nevada Public Land Users Association, and the Sierra Club were briefed.

Comments cited roads, mines, rock-hounding areas, and the mining district as detracting from naturalness and preventing outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Concern was expressed that further study of the area would conflict with potential mineral resource values by

restricting exploration, development, and expansion. The resulting fuel shortage would discourage travel and tourism.

Comments supported wilderness consideration of the unit because it contains the Pinyon Joshua Transition Research Natural Area, diverse topography, and because of the strict criteria which was used for wilderness evaluation.

Only two comments were received during the public review period. One comment supported wilderness designation and the other noted a lack of wilderness characteristics.

The Bureau of Land Management believes that both the Pinyon Joshua Transitional Research Natural Area and its contiguous roadless acreage, units NV-050-0338A and NV-050-0337, clearly lack wilderness character. Evidence of man's activities in portions of the area are substantially noticeable, and the remainder of the units were determined to lack outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation.